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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hannan

Ambassador & Permanent Representative of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva and Vienna

at the General Debate of the First Committee of the

66th Regular Session of the UNGA

New York, October 10, 2011
Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your well-deserved election as the Chair of the First Committee. We look forward to a productive and fruitful session under your able stewardship. You can count on my delegation’s fullest support and cooperation in discharging your responsibilities.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the Statement made by the Permanent Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement countries.

Mr. Chairman,

As a responsible member of the international community, Bangladesh has been doing its part for the promotion of international peace and security. We attach utmost importance to general and complete disarmament in pursuance of our constitutional commitment. We have been a pioneer in South Asia in adhering to all multilateral disarmament treaties, including the NPT, the CWC, the BWC, the CCW and the CTBT. Bangladesh’s contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security through our participation in UN peacekeeping and peace building efforts have received widespread recognition.

Mr. Chairman,

There is no denying that the greatest threat to humanity comes from the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. Bangladesh believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee for a peaceful and secure world. Pending this ultimate goal, non-nuclear weapon states have the legitimate right to receive security
assurances from nuclear weapon states. We note that the unilateral declarations made by five nuclear weapon states, offering voluntary NSAs during the mid-90s, had not been adequate to dispel the security concerns of non-nuclear weapon states, mainly due to the non-binding nature of such declarations. Establishment of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs) and accession to their protocols may be useful interim steps towards securing NSAs. It is, however, obvious that setting up of NWFZs may not be feasible in every region, including in South Asia. In any case, use or non-use of nuclear weapons against any country is a problem of global nature rather than regional. Bangladesh, therefore, continues to stress on the need for commencing negotiations on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument for NSAs as a matter of priority.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh remains committed to the global agenda of nuclear disarmament, and underscores the need for sustaining the momentum in this direction. We, therefore, see merit in starting negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally and effectively verifiable Treaty, banning the production of Fissile Materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We believe that such negotiations must take place in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), as it would bring all nuclear weapon possessing states on board. We also maintain that the negotiations should extend to existing stocks in order to make such a Treaty comprehensive in its scope.

Bangladesh considers the outer space as a common heritage of mankind and calls upon the major space-faring nations to avert weaponization of the outer
space. We believe that the CD should make progress in this critical area by building on the constructive work done so far.

Bangladesh is a staunch supporter of multilateral approach to disarmament and non-proliferation. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament must continue to uphold its legitimacy and credibility by breaking out of its current stalemate, and undertaking substantive work on the basis of consensus. We urge the General Assembly to take necessary measures to convene the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament (SSOD IV), for revitalization of the entire disarmament machinery, including the CD. We appreciate the UN Secretary General’s personal interest and initiatives in this regard.

We welcome the adoption of the report of the Conference on its work in 2011. We have witnessed active and sustained engagement of delegations in the negotiation process towards finalizing the report. I thank all the 2011 Presidents of CD for their dedicated work. We are encouraged by the regular high-level participation in the work of the Conference this year, which bears proof of its continued relevance and centrality in the global discourse on disarmament and non-proliferation.

We must recognize the need for making the CD more receptive to the global voices on disarmament by creating greater space for participation by other relevant stakeholders. We endorse the call for moving towards a “Global Zero” – a phased, verified elimination of all nuclear weapons worldwide. It is a worthy initiative that deserves strong political support and direction.
Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh reiterates the call for adopting a balanced approach in addressing the three pillars of NPT—nuclear disarmament of countries currently possessing nuclear weapons, non-proliferation to countries not yet in possession, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy for all. We recognize, as stipulated in Article IV of NPT, the inalienable rights of the State Parties to NPT to development, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. We believe that peaceful use of nuclear energy under comprehensive IAEA safeguards can help address key development challenges. In this regard, Bangladesh, with the assistance and strict supervision of IAEA, has been working on civil and peaceful use of nuclear technology, especially in agriculture and health sectors. Our Government is currently working towards setting up a nuclear power plant for generation of 1000 MW electricity in phases with IAEA's policy and technical support on nuclear safety and security.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh has been the first Annex—2 South Asian nation to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The universalisation and entry into force of CTBT at an early date would be crucial for attaining our objective of nuclear non-proliferation. The scientific applications of CTBTO’s verification regime have proved to be a critical resource, including in disaster prediction and preparedness. Bangladesh has set up an auxiliary seismic station in Chittagong under CTBTO’s international monitoring system (IMS).
While we must continue to work for total elimination of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), we must not lose sight of the perennial threats posed by proliferation of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. Bangladesh has been following with interest the ongoing efforts to conclude an Arms Trade Treaty to regulate the illicit movement and transfer of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh has acceded to most of the Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) protocols. Bangladesh remains committed to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) regime and attaches importance to the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention, with focus on confident building measures.

As a State Party to the Ottawa Convention, Bangladesh calls for putting an end to the inhumane and unauthorized use of anti-personnel landmines. The international community must commit itself to enhancing financial and technical support for mine clearing operations as well as for rehabilitation of victims in the affected countries.

Mr. Chairman,

It is evident that there is a need for a paradigm shift in international dialogue on peace and development in order to respond to the emerging global challenges of the 21st century. With this in mind, our Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had presented a ‘people’s empowerment and peace-centric development model’ in her address to the UN General Assembly last month. The multi-dimensional model emphasizes the need for promoting social equity and
justice and unlocking the human potentials of every individual in a world of peace. This gives us a fresh perspective to consider the development dividends likely to emerge from arms control and disarmament. We must realize that we can ill afford to continue spending our economic, financial and intellectual resources for building stockpiles of armaments when our people go hungry, remain uneducated, cannot afford essential services, and are vulnerable to diseases, climate change and natural disasters. This inherent paradox in our global discourse on peace and development must be resolved to address the inequities and disparities so prevalent in our world. The stock response in many parts of the world ridden by the current debt crisis has been to tighten the strings around key development spending. It would perhaps help to take a step back and seriously question our approach, while we allow the mindless arms race around us to flourish unencumbered.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.